

Hermione is Black: Harry Potter and the Crisis on Infinite Dark Fantastic Worlds

In late 2015, the casting of Noma Dumezweni as the iconic Hermione Granger in the postcanonical *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* was significant enough to make international headlines. The continuance of the storyworld through transmedia made it possible for series author J.K. Rowling to state that Hermione's race was "never specified," a move that seemed to some observers much like other postcanon admissions, such as the announcement that the mentor-figure Albus Dumbledore was gay, or that Nagini was really a human woman of Asian descent. These shifts in one of the most popular children's and young adult literary speculative canons of our times lead to some final considerations about the crisis on infinite dark fantastic worlds that the presence of a Black Hermione might create. For if the presence of the Dark Other at the margins always creates a spectacular dilemma that makes audiences hesitate, what happens if the protagonists of children's literature suddenly become dark?

This presentation will showcase the ways that youth audiences have responded to textual erasure and misrepresentation by using social media to create new worlds—and how creatives are in turn starting to think about the implications of race and difference in participatory culture, particularly in the context of the Harry Potter franchise and fandom. A tracing of storying traditions from historic roots within Black cultures to their roles within contemporary narrative landscapes is performed via a genealogical approach in order to seek an understanding how young Black fans write themselves into narratives as a way of writing people of color into the metanarratives of fandom and popular culture. An exploration of the ways that today's Black fans are using fanwork to engage in restorying connects this agentive work to reader response theory, research in digital literacies, narrative analysis, and Black studies.

Works to Be Cited in Proposed Presentation (Partial List)

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